

The role of women in Indian society has always been behind the scenes, under the supervision of men. Women have suffered traditions -like sati, jauhar, purdah and devadasi- that ignore and refuse their rights throughout history. With British colonization and Gandhi's independence the practice of these traditions decreased but offences, injustice and repression of women's freedom are still alive like ABORTO SELECTIVO, INFANTICIDIO, ASESINATO PARA CONSEGUIR OTRA DOTE... In the last 10-15 years, organizations, government and even women have claimed for their rights and, as a result, their situation is better nowadays. The gap between men and women -following Shivani Bhardwaj's studies- in relation to access to property, education, labour market, health, sociopolitical participation, still being 16% disadvantage for women.



Evolution or Involution ?

With this graphic we want to give a general view of how indian women situation has changed along different historical periods. The analysis is based on specific facts that have had an important impact in the evolution or involution of their rights and/or their personal freedom. These facts are classified in four key issues in indian society: family, marriage, education and public sphere. With this we want to emphasize that women situation is not independent from other factors, rather, it is the reflection of the political and social situation at the time.



Demonstrating against the Muslim women's Bill, Delhi 1986



A poster showing how religions can be used to entrap and exploit women, Saheli Group, Delhi 1985



A poster on the theme of violence against women, Ahmedabad Women's Action Group (AWAG)



"We will only rest after having broken these prison" Women's Liberation Group poster for International Women's Day, Bombay 1982

Family

At the core of Indian culture lies an innate respect for parents and other elders in the family, and usually no major decision is taken without consulting them. Lines of hierarchy and authority are clearly drawn, and ideals of conduct "help" maintain family harmony. Traditionally, males have controlled key family resources, such as land or businesses, especially in high-status groups. Once women is married she usually lives with her husband's relatives, being under control and taking care of all the reproductive tasks.

Public Sphere

Women follow complex rules of veiling the body and avoidance of public appearance, especially before relatives linked by marriage and before strange men. Restriction and restraint for women in virtually every aspect of life are essential to have them home, limiting women's access to power and to the control of vital resources in a male-dominated society.

Marriage

Marriage is a model to Indian society, where women from birth to marry is being ready for when that time comes. Once in marriage, the woman becomes under the control of her husband and taking it as a reference male, being devoted before and after dying. The family has great importance in deciding the choice of her future husband, as in India traditionally is done arranged marriage.

Education

The role of education in Indian women is conceived as an improvement of the quality of life both at home and outside of home. Because from years ago is considered that if woman is educated the infant mortality rate for example it's reduced and living standards of the country are higher.



Bidi Workers from Nipani

s. XVI
 Estat de confinament. Amb l'entrada dels mogols, entra la religió musulmana i per culpa de les guerres la dona comença a portar vel per evitar ser observada i a més a més deixa de tenir accés a l'educació ja que és portada al punt més allunyat de l'esfera pública. En el cas de les dones riques són portades en harems per no ser un botí de guerra, viuen en un complet estat de confinament. Per tant un altre retrocés.

s. IV
 A la dona li és otorgat el rol d'ESPOSA i MARE, sent ella la responsable de la perpetuació de l'espècie, per tant ha d'estar guardada com una propietat més. Comencen a aparèixer els casaments infantils i l'infanticidi femení. El SATI es generalitza ja que les dones dels guerrers Rajput preferien immolar-se abans de ser violades per l'enemic.

200 a.C
 A partir de les Lleis de Manu que daten del 200a.C hi ha un canvi important pel que fa a la regressió de la dona. Hi ha una sistematització de les castes i l'èxex fonamental era el matrimoni per perpetuar la família pura, donant-se unions només entre el mateix grup social. La dona sempre obeeirà al marit i li serà fidel mentre visqui o sigui mort, instaurant-se les primeres pràctiques del SATI i negant el dret a casar-se després d'enviudar. Les dones amb les lleis són també excloses de l'educació.